

#23
Thos McCulloch 1777-1843

June May 18th 1853

Dear Brother,—

Your work is most honorable, and involves the highest responsibility. You have not chosen Christ, but He has chosen you, that, in His name, you may bear His message of mercy to guilty and perishing sinners, and pray them, in His stead, to be reconciled to God. Your labors and your motives should accord with your designation.

To proclaim, with earnestness and godly sincerity, the glad tidings of salvation, diffusing correct and enlarged views of the great principles of divine truth, giving a prominent place to those distinguishing doctrines, which alone constitute the foundation of Christian activity and comfort, will be your chief employment. Labor, in this, to arouse the conscience and impress the heart, rather than to please the taste, or gratify the predilections of your hearers,—to leave profitable recollections of your labors, rather than favorable impressions of yourself, personally. Your aim must not be, merely to fulfil an appointment, and then to pass to other scenes of labor, satisfied that your duty to the Church has been discharged. You are an ambassador of Christ, and must feel an interest in the success of your work, for your Master's sake. Many have gone forth, with large expectations, and have met disappointment, from forgetfulness of their high commission, and their solemn responsibilities.

While unfolding the great principles of religious truth, you will not fail to enforce their bearing upon the activities and enjoyments of Christian life; commingling practical direction, with that doctrinal teaching, without which your work will be but partially accomplished.

The times in which we live present peculiar claims upon the faithfulness of the messenger of the Cross. Truths, heretofore regarded as essential, are, too frequently, deemed unwarrantably stern. Purity in order, and firmness of Christian conduct, heretofore considered as characteristics of a prosperous Church, are beginning to be esteemed overstrictness. This tendency to smooth things in the teachings of the sanctuary, and accommodation of doctrine and order to the feelings and wishes of men, will demand from you, as far as they come within the range of your duty, uncompromising, yet affectionate, firmness in the prosecution of your work. To "increase the nation," these courses are often adopted; but, ultimately, they react, both upon the Missionary and the Church of which he is the accredited agent. Let it not be said of you, that you have increased the nation, at the expense of its joy. Fear of man, desire for human applause, and dread of the scripturally disturbing influence of faithful expositions of divine truth, have led to unfaithfulness to Christ. Be it your study to avoid a snare, which has been dishonoring to the Saviour and ruinous to the souls of men.

In the course of your labors, family visitation, it is expected, will occupy a portion of your time. In this, you will find ample scope for the discharge of the duty of teaching from house to house, a duty so important to the interests of the Redeemer's cause. Personal and family religion, careful training of children, sanctification of the Sabbath, and other similar subjects, will demand your earnest attention. In enforcing such duties, with affectionate earnestness, you will require to consider, carefully, the peculiar circumstances of each family, that instruction and admonition may be both suitable and well timed. Such visitations, prudently conducted, will deepen those impressions of Sabbath exercises, which, otherwise, might be lost. Seek the advice and presence of an Elder, where these can be obtained.

Careful attention to sick and afflicted will, also, form a part of your work; together with those steps for the benefit of the young, which the particular circumstances of the locality, may authorize you to take; and it is trusted, that you will exemplify diligence, in prudently originating and promoting those plans, which may present a reasonable prospect of permanence and success.

The interests of a Mission station, left to general superintendance, are not apt to meet the watchful and prompt attention, which, by the divine blessing, ensures prosperity. Hence the necessity of organization, and the appointment of a Committee of Management, forming a channel of communication with the Courts of the Church. Where circumstances warrant, you will suggest the propriety and benefit of such an arrangement, affording all requisite direction and advice, but carefully avoiding all unnecessary interference,—aiding but not controlling.

Such occasions will afford valuable opportunities of communicating information regarding the order of the Church, and you will not fail to improve them, when offered. You will, thus, prepare the way for that thorough organization, which properly belongs to the Presbytery, under whose superintendance you may be laboring.

Besides this, where there is good prospect of edification, it may be well to recommend, that during the intervals of Missionary visits, the public worship of God be maintained. The requisite details will, of course, be left to your own discretion and prudence, as they may be required to vary, according to the situation and circumstances of the locality.

In your intercourse with the people among whom you may labor, it is expected, that you will maintain such a position, and set such an example, as will confirm your public teachings. Inattention to this important point creates a bad impression, both of the Preacher and his message, and there are few things which so readily weaken the hands of a Missionary, and frustrate the object of Sabbath services, as abandonment, in private, of the dignity and sacredness of that office, which is assumed in public. The same remark holds true of the neglect of private duties, the performance of which, a people have been led to expect. A godly walk and conversation is a necessary and powerful element in the success of the Missionary of the Cross.

In the course of your journeyings, you will often encounter parties, and be placed in circumstances, where one false step, or one opportunity of good neglected, may blight your prospects of usefulness. In all such cases, you will endeavour to act, as you know your Master would require, with Christian watchfulness and prudence guiding your every movement, and availing yourself of every opening, which Providence may afford,—adapting yourself to persons and circumstances, but with a single object, of being instrumental in saving some.

In prosecuting your work, you will bear in mind, that the Church Courts expect from you a full and accurate account of your proceedings,—such account to contain, not a bare statement of Sabbath services or private labors, but a view of the state of religion in the locality, the encouragement or discouragement with which you may meet, the prospects of success, and such other topics as may suggest themselves, as involving interesting and necessary information, and calculated to facilitate those farther movements, which the Church Courts may have in view.

This Journal, you are to submit to the Presbytery, in whose bounds you labor.

To the above directions and advices, may be most appropriately added, the duty of Prayer, as a necessary and powerful means of guiding and sustaining you in your honorable and arduous work, and of opening to you the hearts of your hearers. Be diligent in cultivating a spirit of earnest prayer, and may He who has counted you faithful, in putting you into the ministry, bless you and your work, and in the confidence that He will do so, we commend you to Him, and to the Word of His Grace, for the work, whereunto you have been appointed.

By order of the Board of Home Missions,



Secretary.

The Board herewith forward to you a series of Regulations adopted by Synod, for your guidance in your work, and to which they trust you will attend diligently and faithfully:

Regulations for the Guidance of Probationers of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia.

Adopted by Synod, and ordered to be communicated to Probationers by the Board of Home Missions, together with a Letter of Instructions from the Board.

I.—All Probationers are placed by Synod under the superintendance of the Home Mission Board, as the only official channel of employment.

II.—On application the Board is empowered to transfer Probationers from one Presbytery to another, it being understood that the Presbytery make a limited application, or the Board a limited appointment, and in no case excepting a call, said appointment to be annulled.

III.—When a Probationer's appointments have expired, and the Presbytery does not require from him farther services, intimation thereof is to be conveyed by the Clerk of Presbytery to the Secretary of the Board, together with his address.

IV.—No Probationer under the superintendance of any Presbytery, shall take regular appointments under another, unless duly transferred; and if by oversight or otherwise, Presbyteries shall fail to give employment to a Probationer, he shall report himself to the Board.

V.—Probationers are required not to interfere unnecessarily in the Congregational business or arrangements of localities in which they may be labouring, and especially when Congregations may have in view to call a Pastor.

VI.—Probationers are required to submit to Presbyteries a written report of their proceedings, and also to the Board,

when their appointments are of a strictly missionary character.

VII.—Probationers may receive money in Congregations and stations in which they labour, but shall account faithfully to the Board or Presbytery who are responsible for remuneration of services.

VIII.—Any ordained Probationer acting under the Board, in admitting parties to the fellowship of the Church, shall take order, that the names of said parties be inserted in the Congregational Records.

IX.—Probationers labouring in vacant Congregations are required to perform all the duties of the settled Pastor—in as far as these are consistent with their position—such as Family visitation—Visitation of the Sick—Prayer Meetings—Sabbath Schools—Bible Classes—and when these are wanting, to endeavour their establishment, should there be a prospect of their continuance. Each Probationer to commence his visitations where relinquished by his predecessors, till the whole be accomplished.

X.—Probationers to be exceedingly careful to observe a godly life and conversation, that their intercourse with the people in private, may confirm their public teachings.

XI.—Probationers to keep a journal of all their missionary proceedings, for the information of Presbyteries or the Board.